

Message Text

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ACTION EA-13

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ADP-00 PM-03 DODE-00 EUR-10 NSCE-00

NSC-10 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 IO-03 PRS-01

DPW-01 RSR-01 /068 W

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O P 021000Z JUL 73

FM AMCONGEN BIEN HOA

TO AMEMBASSY SAIGON IMMEDIATE

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0026

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST PRIORITY

AMCONSUL CAN THO PRIORITY

AMCONSUL DA NANG PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA PRIORITY

AMCONSUL NHA TRANG PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH PRIORITY

VIENTIANE PRIORITY 019

AMEMBASSY WARSAW PRIORITY

CINCPAC FOR POLAD PRIORITY

USDEL FRANCE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BIEN HOA 0243

LIMDIS

NOFORN1652: GDS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PINT MILI VS

SUBJECT: MILITARY REGION 3 AT X PLUS 150

1. SUMMARY: PROSPECTS FOR A CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES, AS OPPOSED TO A LASTING PEACE, APPEARED MUCH BRIGHTER IN THE FINAL DAYS OF X PLUS 150 THAN THEY HAD BEEN IN EARLIER PERIODIC ASSESSMENTS. FIGHTING BETWEEN THE BELLIGERENTS WAS AT AN ALL-TIME LOW, AND MOST OF THE CASUALTIES SUFFERED BY GVN FORCES RESULTED NOT FROM DIRECT CONFRONTATION WITH THE COMMUNISTS BUT FROM MINES AND BOOBY TRAPS ENCOUNTERED WHILE OUT ON EXTENDED PATROLS. MR 3'S MILITARY COMMUNITY CONTINUES TO BE PESSIMISTIC ABOUT A LASTING PEACE, THE JUNE 13

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JOINT COMMUNIQUE NOTWITHSTANDING, THE EFFICACY OF WHICH THEY QUESTION.

THIS PARTICULAR GROUP IS HIGHLY SKEPTICAL OF COMMUNIST INTENTIONS VIS-A-VIS PEACE, BELIEVING THAT IT IS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE FIGHTING REVERTS TO A PRE-CEASE-FIRE LEVEL. THE CG OF MR 3, LTG NGUYEN VAN MINH, SET THE TONE OF THE COMMUNIQUE CRITICISM WHEN HE INITIALLY CHARACTERIZED IT AS A PROVISION FOR ENDLESS DEBATE AND VERY LITTLE IN THE WAY OF TANGIBLE BENEFITS FOR THE GVN. HE HAD A CHANGE OF HEART LATER, HOWEVER, AFTER HE HAD OBSERVED THE APPRECIABLE REDUCTION IN THE NUMBER OF INCIDENTS RECORDED IN THIS MILITARY REGION SINCE JUNE 15. HIS PROFOUND MISTRUST OF THE COMMUNISTS AND HIS LONG-HELD FEELING THAT ANY PEACE TO WHICH THE COMMUNISTS WOULD AGREE WOULD BE FOR BUYING TIME NEVER CHANGED, HOWEVER. REGION V ICCS WAS STILL BESET WITH IRREPARABLE DIVISION DURING THIS PERIOD, WITH THE POLES AND HUNGARIANS CONTINUING TO BE MORE CONCERNED WITH THE PRO-

TECTION OF THEIR IDEOLOGY THAN OBJECTIVITY. CANADIAN AGGRESSIVENESS WAS STILL PREVALENT, AND THE HEAD OF THIS DELEGATION WAS BENT ON NAILING THE COMMUNISTS TO THE CROSS AS A FINAL GESTURE PRIOR TO HIS DEPARTURE. THE INDONESIANS, ON THE OTHER HAND, LEFT THE IMPRESSION THAT THEY WERE COMPETING WITH THE MORE OUTSPOKEN CANADIANS FOR THE ANTI-COMMUNIST CROWN. END SUMMARY.

CEASE-FIRE BUT NO PEACE;

2. LASTING PEACE, SO EAGERLY DESIRED BY MOST PEOPLE IN MR 3 CONTINUES

TO ELUDE THIS REGION, BUT PROSPECTS FOR A CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES ARE MUCH BRIGHTER NOW THAN THEY HAVE BEEN SINCE JANUARY 28. PERHAPS BECAUSE OF JOINT COMMUNIQUE'S ROLLBACK TO JANUARY 28 PROVISION, THE EXPECTED COMMUNIST PRE-REAL-CEASE-FIRE LAND-AND HAMLET-GRAB FAILED TO MATERIALIZE; AND AFTER CEASE-FIRE ON JUNE 15, MILITARY CLASHES DROPPED APPRECIABLY. MR 3 G-2 REPORTED 155 SUCH CLASHES BETWEEN 0800 JUNE 1 AND 0800 JUNE 8, AND 144 DURING WEEK ENDING 0800 JUNE 15; IN JUNE 15 - 22 PERIOD THERE WERE 114 CLASHES, INCLUDING 15 BEFORE THE NOON JUNE 15 DEADLINE, AND IN WEEK ENDING 0800 JUNE 29 NUMBER OF CLASHES HAD DROPPED TO 73. INTELLIGENCE REPORTS SUGGEST, EVENTS THUS FAR TEND TO CONFIRM, AND GVN COMMANDERS NOW CONCEDE, THAT COMMUNIST FORCES ARE GENERALLY DEPLOYED IN DEFENSIVE POSTURE TO PREVENT GVN ENCROACHMENTS ON TERRITORY OVER WHICH THEY CLAIM CONTROL, ALTHOUGH BOTH MAIN FORCE AND LOCAL FORCE ELEMENTS HAVE APPARENTLY VENTURED OUT TO MAKE TROUBLE IN SEVERAL AREAS.

3. MANY OF CLASHES, BOTH BEFORE AND AFTER CEASE-FIRE DEADLINE,
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APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN INITIATED BY RVNAF FORCES. BEFORE CEASE-FIRE PRESIDENT THIEU ORDERED MR 3 CG LTG MINH TO OPEN NATIONAL HIGHWAY 13 BETWEEN LAI KHE AND AN LOC. AFTER THIS OPERATION BOGGED DOWN AGAINST

STIFF COMMUNIST RESISTANCE, IT WAS CALLED OFF AND ARVN LAUNCHED OPERATION TO CLEAR INTERPROVINCIAL ROUTE 1-A IN BINH DUONG PROVINCE BETWEEN PHU CUONG (THE PROVINCE CAPITAL) AND PHU GIAO (THE DISTRICT TOWN). THIS PROVINCE OPERATION WAS SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED BEFORE THE

CEASE-FIRE DEADLINE, REPORTEDLY AT A HEAVY COST. PHUOC TUY PROVINCE
CHIEF LAUNCHED LAST-MINUTE CLEARING OF PROVINCIAL ROUTE 44 ALONG
COAST BETWEEN LONG HAI AND PHUOC HAI VILLAGES AND PUSH OUT INTO
CONTESTED LONG PHUOC VILLAGE AND NUI DAT TO IMPROVE SECURITY FOR
POPULATED AREAS ON EVE OF CEASE-FIRE. AFTER CEASE-FIRE II,

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"AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH PRIORITY 020
VIENTIANE PRIORITY 020
WARSAW PRIORITY 010
CINCPAC FOR POLAD PRIORITY
USDEL FRANCE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BIEN HOA 0243

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NOFORN AND APPARENTLY FOR THE PURPOSE OF STRENGTHENING THE GVN'S POSI-
TION IN BARGAINING WITH THE PRG IN THE TPJMC OVERZONES OF CONTROL, PHUOC
LONG PROVINCE CHIEF COL. LUU YEM DIRECTED TWO RANGER BATTALIONS IN
SUCCESSFUL CLEARING OPERATION ALONG NATIONAL HIGHWAY 14 BETWEEN
DONG XOAI AND JUNCTION WITH ROUTE 311, AND RVNAF ELEMENTS WERE ABOUT
TO START TO CLEAR INTERPROVINCIAL ROUTE 1-A DONG XOAI AND PHUOC VINH,
PHU GIAO DISTRICT, BINH DUONG PROVINCE. (THIS OPERATION WAS ALSO

INTENDED TO PERMIT MILITARY RESUPPLY CONVOY TO SONG BE - PHUOC BINH AREA). INTERPROVINCIAL ROUTE 2 BETWEEN DUC THANH DISTRICT TOWN, PHUOC TUY PROVINCE, AND XUAN LOC IN LONG KHANH PROVINCE WAS APPARENTLY

CLEARED AGAIN BY ELEMENTS OF THE TWO PROVINCES' RF, AND OF THE ARVN
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18TH INFANTRY DIVISION. ASIDE FROM THESE LARGE OPERATIONS, RVNAF FORCES HAVE BEEN AGGRESSIVE IN SMALLER WAYS, AND THEIR COMMANDERS ADMIT THAT MANY OF THEIR CASUALTIES HAVE BEEN CAUSED BY COMMUNIST MINES AND BOOBY TRAPS WHILE OUT ON EXTENDED PARTOLS AND CLEARING OPERATIONS -- FOR EXAMPLE, IN SEVERAL INSECURE VILLAGES OF GIA DINH PROVINCE. WHILE THESE RVNAF ACTIONS COULD BE CONSTRUED AS CEASE-FIRE VIOLATIONS, GVN CLAIMS THAT IT CONTROLS ALL THE TERRITORY IN WHICH THEY HAVE BEEN CONDUCTED.

SCORN HEAPED ON THE JOINT COMMUNIQUE

4. ASIDE FROM THE IDEA OF IMPROVING THEIR TPJMC BARGAINING POSTURE, GVN AGGRESSIVENESS IN MR 3 REFLECTS THE CYNICISM WITH WHICH HIGH GVN OFFICIALS AND COMMANDERS VIEW ULTIMATE COMMUNIST INTENTIONS, AND THE SCORN WITH WHICH THEY VIEW THE JUNE 13 JOINT COMMUNIQUE. THUS THEY BELIEVED THAT IF COMMUNISTS WERE RESPECTING CEASE-FIRE, IT WAS ONLY TO BUY TIME; THAT COMMUNIST TERRORIST ACTIVITIES WOULD INCREASE AND THAT COMMUNISTS WOULD LAUNCH NEW ATTACKS WITHIN 60-90 DAYS, AND THAT ONLY THROUGH COMPLETE VICTORY BY RVNAF COULD REAL AND LASTING PEACE BE BROUGHT TO SVN COUNTRYSIDE. THESE GVN CIRCLES CONSIDERED THAT THE COMMUNIQUE CONTAINED NOTHING NEW, VERY LITTLE GOOD FOR THE GVN, AND DID NOTHING TO BRING PEACE CLOSER. MR 3 CG LTG MINH TOLD ME THAT COMMUNIQUE OPENS DOOR TO ENDLESS DEBATE AND OFFERS NO TANGIBLE BENEFITS FOR GVN. MINH CHANGED HIS POSITION SOMEWHAT, HOWEVER, AFTER OBSERVING THE REDUCTION IN THE NUMBER OF INCIDENTS IN THE FIRST WEEK OF CEASE-FIRE II, AND AGREED THAT THE COMMUNISTS HAVE BACKED OFF MILITARILY FOR THE TIME BEING. BUT HE HELD FAST TO HIS BELIEF THAT THE COMMUNISTS ARE ONLY BUYING TIME, NOT PREPARING FOR A LASTING PEACE. IRASCRIBLE 25TH INFANTRY DIVISION CG BT LE VAN TU TOLD US USG HAD "COERCED" GVN INTO ACCEPTING AN AGREEMENT AGAINST ITS OWN BEST INTERESTS. ALL COMMANDERS CLAIMED TO BE EXPRESSING "PERSONAL" VIEWS ON THESE MATTERS, AND SAID THEY WOULD FOLLOW WHATEVER POLICY WAS DECIDED BY SUPERIORS IN SAIGON.

5. COMMENT: CONTRARY TO BLEAK GVN PREDICTIONS, OUR OWN VIEW IS THAT COMMUNISTS DO NOT RPT NOT INTEND TO RESUME HEAVY FIGHTING IN NEXT 60-90 DAYS, AND WILL NOT DO SO UNLESS IMPLEMENTATION OF OTHER PROVISIONS OF AGREEMENT AND COMMUNIQUE IS HOPELESSLY STALLED AND/OR AS RESPONSE TO EXCESSIVE GVN AGGRESSIVENESS. LOWERED COMMUNIST MILITARY PROFILE SINCE ONSET OF CEASE-FIRE II, THEIR PROPAGANDA EMPHASIS ON NEED FOR STRICT IMPLEMENTATION OF AGREEMENT AND COM-
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MUNIQUE, PROVISIONS ON RESTORATION OF DEMOCRATIC LIBERTIES AND DELINEATION OF ZONES OF CONTROL, AND THEIR EFFORTS TO PRPULATE ZONES THEY OCCUPY SUCH AS NORTHERN TAY NINH, ALL POINT TO DECISION TO PURSUE THEIR OBJECTIVES BY ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL, RATHER THAN MILITARY, MEANS. WE DO NOT DISCOUNT POSSIBILITY OF LOCALIZED SKIRMISHES CONTINUING, HOWEVER; NOR DO WE DISCOUNT PROBABILITY THAT AT SOME LATER DATE COMMUNISTS MIGHT OPT FOR MILITARY ROUTE IF ALL ELSE FAILS. END COMMENT.

CANADIANS' ACCELERATE AGGRESSIVENESS

6. MAJOR DEVELOPMENT IN REGION V ICCS DURING THIS PERIOD WAS THE EFFECT CANADA'S DECISION TO WITHDRAW HAD ON CANDEL MEMBERS THEMSELVES.

THEY WENT ABOUT BUSINESS OF DOCUMENTING CASE AGAINST POLES AND HUNGARIANS WITH UNPRECEDENTED DILIGENCE. HEAD OF DELEGATION WAS BENT ON PUTTING BLAME FOR LACK OF PROGRESS IN THIS REGION SQUARELY ON THE BACKS OF THE POLES AND UNNGARIANS. HE TOLD US THAT HE IS COMPILING DOCUMENTATION WHICH MAY BE USED AT A LATER DATE FOR THIS PURPOSE. CANADIANS SEEMED TO VIEW POLES MORE THAN HUNGARIANS AS PERPETRATORS OF OBSTRUCTIONIST TACTICS. (OUR OWN VIEW IS THAT THE HUNGARIANS ARE A BIT MORE SOPHISTICATED AND ARE WILLING TO DISCUSS DIFFERENCES WITHOUT BEING OVERLY OFFENSIVE.) HUNGARIANS DID NOT DEPART FROM OBJECTIVE OF HOLDING PRG BLAMELESS, HOWEVER, REGARDLESS OF THE INCONTROVERTIBILITY OF THE EVIDENCE. BEST EXAMPLE OF THIS WAS RECENT CHOPPER INCIDENT WHICH WAS ENROUTE TO AN LOC OVER COMMUNIST-CONTROLLED TERRITORY WITH CANDEL AND HUNGDEL HEADS ABOARD. HUNGARIANS AGREED THAT CHOPPER TOOK FIRE BUT WOULD NOT AGREE THAT COMMUNISTS WERE RESPONSIBLE THOUGH ALL ON BOARD WITNESSED COMMUNIST SOLDIER ON GROUND WITH AK-47. WE ARE TOLD THAT THE DAY ON WHICH THE CASE WAS BEING DISCUSSED BOTH THE CANADIANS AND INDONESIANS POUNDED THE TABLE WITH A FEROCITY THAT HAD THE POLES AND HUNGARIANS WRITHING IN THEIR CHAIRS. IT APPARENTLY DID NOT FAZE THEM BECAUSE THE OUTCOME OF THE VOTE WAS THE USUAL 2-2 SPLIT.

7. THE INDONESIANS APPEARED TO BE COMPETING WITH THE MORE OUTSPOKEN CANADIANS FOR THE ANTI-COMMUNIST CROWN. IN A COMPLETE REVERSAL OF CHARACTER, THE INDONESIANS WERE VICIFEROUS IN THEIR CRITICISM OF HUNGDEL AND POLDEL OBSTRUCTIONISM. ONE OF THE INDONESIANS TOLD US THAT THEY HAVE HAD ENOUGH AND WILL NOW PLAY MORE OF A ROLE IN THE DELIBERATIONS, EVEN IF THEY HAVE TO POUND THE TABLE TO GET THEIR
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